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GPHA *matters*

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This month's Matters

President's Message	1
From Education to Advocacy, GPHA Conference a Huge Success	2
GPHA Membership	3
Report from the Board Secretary	4
Remarks to the House Study Committee on the State Health System	10
Southern Health Association (SHA) Report To Georgia Public Health Association (GPHA)	11

President's Message

W. Douglas Skelton, M.D.



A little over a year ago I noted the crisis in Georgia's public health programs; a crisis of inadequate funding, and a state personnel system with a way out of date salary structure. A crisis exacerbated by public health's first responder 24/7 responsibility for emergency preparedness and response. These conditions continue, and state level public health leadership so far has been unable to reverse the situation.

But there are some reasons, limited as yet, for optimism. Last year's House Public Health Study Committee produced an excellent report highlighting the importance of public health, clearly identifying problems, and recommending reasonable solutions. Proposed solutions, while not yet implemented, are being considered and expanded by this year's House Health Systems Study Committee chaired by House Appropriations chair, Rep. Ben Harbin of Augusta. Rep. Harbin honored GPHA by holding a public hearing of the committee during GPHA, and by a closing plenary session speech where he made it clear that he heard public health's crisis of concern and that "help is on the way."

Another reason for optimism is the increased advocacy of the county Boards of Health. During the 2007 legislative session many Boards of Health passed resolutions asking the General Assembly for a 15% increase in state funding to the county Boards to offset the austerity cuts of several years ago. The resolutions arrived too late to impact the '08 budget. However, one of GPHA's legislative proposals for the '09 budget is for the 15% increase and for each county's amount to be specifically listed in the budget. The latter action, regrettably, is viewed by many as essential to preclude the dollars being diverted to other Department of Human Resources' needs.

Perhaps more important long term is that 144 Boards of Health joined GPHA last year, adding 1,008 individual members. Many board members attended the annual meeting, and several testified to Rep. Harbin's Health Systems Study Committee. Their local voices of concern clearly had an impact. Our Board of Health member colleagues are critical to our future. I thank all of you, and I look forward to working closely with you this year.

So, what is my responsibility, and yours, and GPHA's? Clearly we must continue to grow the organization. Membership numbers make a political statement. And we need our major planned events, i.e. Sellers-McCroan and the annual meeting, to get even bigger and better.

And we must center our advocacy by individually projecting a consistent, powerful, positive presence for public health in all our efforts. More specifically, we need to advocate with our elected officials for the following GPHA positions:

- 1) the creation of a Department of Public Health or a Department of Health inclusive of public health and MH/DD/AD,
- 2) a 15% increase in the state grants to counties to offset years of austerity cuts; and
- 3) raise public health nursing salaries to 85% of market and develop a career track for public health nurses.

The task is clear. Restore Georgia's public health program! Let's do it!!!!



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

SAVE THESE DATES!

**22nd Annual
SELLERS-McCROAN
LECTURE ★ LUNCHEON ★ AWARD**

★
**Friday, March 28, 2008
Cobb Galleria Centre
Two Galleria Parkway ★ Atlanta
12:00 noon**

★
The Sellers-McCroan Lecture ★ Luncheon ★ Award
is an annual event sponsored jointly by
The Georgia Public Health Association, Inc.
and
The Division of Public Health
Georgia Department of Human Resources

**79th Annual
Georgia Public Health Association
ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE**

★
**December 3-5, 2008
Westin Savannah Harbor**

★
**Keep up-to-date on all GPHA activities!
Visit our website:
www.gapha.org**

From Education to Advocacy, GPHA Conference a Huge Success

Ginger Heidel, Public Relations Committee

Beneath the Spanish moss and beside the Savannah River, hundreds of Public Health professionals, Boards of Health members, and health experts gathered with one common goal: improving the health of all Georgians. The 78th Annual Meeting and Conference of the Georgia Public Health Association provided a fantastic opportunity to network, educate, advocate and collaborate to build a stronger public health system.

More than 700 people registered for the September conference, which included three full days of well-attended and well-organized workshops, awards luncheons, plenary sessions and receptions. Some people couldn't even wait until the first official day of the conference to get started; several pre-conference meetings were held the day before, including a seminar on teen pregnancy prevention strategies led by the Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention.

Savannah's Mayor Otis Johnson offered a welcome during the opening session. In a letter he read aloud to conference attendees, Mayor Johnson said, "I'm honored that the City of Savannah is hosting this 78th Annual Meeting and Conference of the Georgia Public Health Association, and I hope it is remembered as a place where great work began to instigate positive change."

This year's conference was unique, as legislators from the House Health Systems Study Committee held a public hearing during the conference about the state of public health in Georgia. It was standing-room-only as participants took advantage of the opportunity to share their concerns. "We were able to talk directly with legislators about the decisions they make, and how they can have a positive impact on our public health system," says Dr. Doug Skelton, GPHA President and Health Director of the Coastal Health District. "This is a critical time for public health, and these lawmakers are listening to us."

The conference also provided a great opportunity for exhibitors with a record 48 booths lining the conference hall. "Many of the exhibitors expressed that this was the best conference ever," says Fred Agel, immediate past-president of

GPHA. "Usually participants just come by for pens, candy, etc. This was not the case this year as folks came by the booths to ask questions and to obtain information."

Agel also heard lots of positive feedback about the conference as a whole. "Many who attended workshops spoke very highly about the quality of the presentations and the great range of information that was available. Great food and a great turnout for all of the activities - a really great show!"

The conference was also the first joint educational conference of GPHA and the Southern Health Association. "It was a great conference," says SHA President Becky Barnes. "I feel it was the beginning of a long and beneficial relationship for Georgia and all Southern Health States. We learn so much from each other. At the SHA Awards Luncheon, our own Dr. Joe Alderman was presented with the Howell Special Meritorious Service Award. Dr. Alderman serves as SHA representative to the GPHA Board of Directors and also serves as chair of the GPHA Bylaws Committee.

Dr. Randy McCall, administrator of the Coastal Health District, which hosted the conference, is already looking forward to next year's GPHA conference. "What a tremendous opportunity to have GPHA right here in our region, as the strongest group of health care professionals in the state come together to discuss and study the numerous challenges facing Georgia today," says McCall. "We look forward to a continued presence of this leadership organization in our community and welcome the conference next year and many years to come."

But members don't have to wait for the next conference to reconvene. The 22nd Annual Sellers-McCroan Lecture and Awards Luncheon will take place March 28th in Atlanta. "I'm already looking forward to gathering again at the Seller's-McCroan awards luncheon," says Skelton. "When we get together, we can be a powerful, positive force for public health."

Southern Health Association (SHA) Report to the Georgia Public Health Association (GPHA)

Joe Alderman, SHA Representative

GPHA/SHA Joint Meeting: The Georgia Public Health Association and the Southern Health Association Joint meeting was a success. Representatives from AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, NC, SC, and TN provided a beneficial exchange of expertise and networking with public health association members throughout the south.

The keynote speaker, Stephanie B. Coursey Bailey, MD, MS, on September 6th, 2007 provided an interesting thought provoking presentation. Dr. Bailey is the current Chief of the Office of Public Health Practice at CDC in October 2006. She has served as President of NACCHO and she received the prestigious 2004 Roemer Award by the American Public Health Association for the many innovative health programs that she pioneered as the former Director of Health for Nashville, TN

Pandemic Flu Panel: A 90-minute panel discussion concerning what SHA states are planning for Pandemic Flu was well attended. The Panel included representatives from Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Public Policy & Resolutions are shared from other affiliate states. Three resolutions were passed during the SHA annual meeting: Resolution #1-2007: Promoting Colorectal Cancer

Screening, Resolution #2-2007: Promoting Active Communities by Environmental Design, and Resolution #3-2007: Preserving Local Control of Public Health Laws

SHA Awards: An important part of SHA annual meeting is recognizing public health professionals from around the region for their contributions to public health. Recipients of these awards are to be individual members of SHA or an affiliate member of their state public health association.

Award winners: Special Meritorious Award - Dudley Conner (KY), Ficquett-Holley Award - Sarah Moorman, RN, MN (SC), Charles G. Jordan Award - David Newman (AL), Howell Special Meritorious Service to Public Health Award - Joe Alderman, DDS, MPH (GA). Not present - Outstanding Legislator Award - Governor Phil Bredesen (TN).

Newly Elected SHA Council Members: President - Tammy Burke (TN), President Elect - Suzie Hamm (KY), First Vice President - Carey Woods (AR), Secretary - Richard Funderburk (SC), Treasurer - Dennis Thompson (SC), and Member-at-Large - Ted Hanekamp (KY)

Consider joining SHA as an individual member and attending the Arkansas Public Health Association/SHA Joint Meeting: May 7-9, 2008 in Hot Spring, AR.



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Robert J. DiVito, Esq., Editor
rjdivito@comcast.net

Remarks to the House Study Committee on the State Health System

W. Douglas Skelton, M.D.
President, Georgia Public Health Association

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for your well placed interest in the adequacy of the state health system. Regrettably, there are many areas of concern, but I want to limit my prepared comments to the state mental health system which I was honored to lead in the 1970s, a public system which then and now included services for the mentally ill, the developmentally disabled, and those with addictive diseases.

My perspective covers over 30 years, but my views are organized around three time frames, i.e., the years prior to AJC reporter Jack Nelson's 1959, expose of the conditions at Central State Hospital; the Governor Vandiver initiated changes which were refined over many years by state program leaders who were either medical specialists in psychiatry or had other professional mental health training and significant experience in organizing and managing public systems of care, and lastly some comments on where we find the system today and actions I believe will improve the system's ability to meet the state's responsibility.

In 1959 Jack Nelson wrote a series of articles exposing the inadequate staffing and resultant substandard care of Central State Hospital. His work was honored with a 1960 Pulitzer Prize, and it triggered Governor Vandiver to move the hospital out of the state welfare department and into Georgia's then Department of Health and to initiate a plan to reform the system.

Governor Vandiver chose Dr. Addison Duval to lead an effort that professionalized public mental health in Georgia. He and his successors, of whom I am one, maintained the effort over many years. The results included a system of regional hospitals to serve needy citizens closer to home, a training and research institute, an additional hospital to serve the developmentally disabled plus day training centers, and alcohol and substance abuse programs.

Federal Funding to begin community mental health centers further expanded services, and as the federal funds declined the need for a further source of revenue became critical. A clinic option was developed in Georgia's Medicaid program, an option allowing Medicaid reimbursement for centers providing a comprehensive range of services to a defined population.

A second problem in the 70's was the disconnect between the regional hospitals and the community programs, i.e., patients were being admitted and discharged with no involvement of community mental health professionals

whose services may have prevented the patient's hospitalization initially and/or reduced the likelihood of a relapse requiring rehospitalization. Dr. Derril Gay, another of Dr. Duval's successors, suggested regional consortia of hospital and community programs with the consortia responsible for assuring the most efficient use of resources to best serve citizens of the region.

The mental health professionals, including John Gates, later head of the mental health program at the Carter Center, further improved the system, and then changes occurred which, while well intended, have contributed to today's problems.

The first was HB100 which created regional and community service boards in an attempt to provide more local decision-making. The regional boards did not survive, and the community service boards, many of which provide quality services, have been pilloried with state financial changes. The last being a push for a fee for services arrangement with the state, an arrangement which is not appropriate for the more severely and chronically ill, and which often places the state and community programs in buyer-seller roles instead of as partners in meeting the states' parents patrice responsibility to protect our citizens who due to illness cannot protect or care for themselves.

A second problem was the abolishment of the shared responsibility vested in consortia of hospital and community program leaders. The schism now extends through the system. The state hospitals report to Atlanta, and decisions about their use and staffing levels are made without consensus from the community service boards or other local professionals or advocacy groups. Decisions to reduce hospital beds and close programs, now being acknowledged as an error, often were made over the objections of the local programs and local advocates who knew the remaining resources would be inadequate.

These problems, coupled with budget cuts especially in the hospitals have resulted in another series of shameful articles in the AJC authored by Andy Miller and Alan Judd. Regrettably, the articles have not generated the level of response which occurred in the 1960's, but your work and Governor's Commission may be on the way to doing so, perhaps by also recommending that the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Addictive Disease be moved out of DHR as a stand alone health agency or as a component of a new Department of Health.

GPHA Membership and More...

Kathryn Martin, PhD, MPA, Membership Chair

The 78th Annual Meeting and Conference in Savannah found more than 700 of us gathered to learn, work, and grow as an organization where opportunities abound. Continuing education, advocacy, and professional networking were just three of the benefits of GPHA.

This year we have been charged with an even greater task – to move the organization forward in troubling times where dollars are dwindling and needs are growing. Between the overarching goals to promote the public's health, we are now charged with protecting our environment and preventing infectious diseases such as a pandemic flu epidemic.

GPHA needs you. And you need GPHA. Where else can you find expertise in a moment – where peers understand the challenge and offer assistance at the same time?

Consider the investment. It's \$40 a year. That's 77¢ a week. Your membership buys you much more than you spend on a parking space in Savannah or a cup of coffee in Macon. And membership into your professional association is tax deductible.

Throughout the year GPHA members will be on line and active in setting the legislative agenda. Your support is needed as we build our infrastructure and create the future for public health in Georgia.

Count on me to keep you informed on our progress and I'll count on you to do your part in moving GPHA's agenda forward in the coming year.

Greetings from Steve Anthony

I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Steve Anthony and I have been assisting GPHA this past year with your efforts in advocating your needs, positions and desires to Georgia government—legislative and executive branches. I will be doing the same for this coming year. I have spent the past 30 years working in or with the legislative and executive branches.

I want to assure you that, while this is what I am hired to do, I signed on because I truly want to help you. I believe in the role you play and the services you provide to our citizens. It is crucial that we all work together to ensure that everyone in state government realizes this.

Feel free to contact me individually if you have any questions or concerns that may help me in my efforts. I look forward to the coming year as we strive to improve your positions in and out of government.

Dr. Alderman Receives Southern Health Award

Dr. Joe Alderman, who currently serves as the Executive Secretary of the American Board of Dental Public Health, and as Oral Health Consultant for Region IV Head Start, was presented the Southern Health Association's (SHA) Howell Special Meritorious Service to Public Health Award, at the SHA recent annual awards luncheon which was held in Savannah, Georgia. The Howell Award is named in honor of a past President of SHA and recognizes an individual for outstanding and continuous service to, involvement with, and support of public health particularly in the field of prevention. The Southern Health Association is comprised of members from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.



Dr. Alderman received his DDS from the Creighton University School of Dentistry, MPH from the University of Michigan, and Residency Certificate from the Jefferson County Health Department, Birmingham, Alabama. As Director of the Oral Health Section, Georgia Division of Public Health, from 1981 to 2003, Dr. Alderman was responsible for numerous programs including community fluoridation, pit and fissure sealants, and other preventive measures in public health clinics and in community settings. Through his dedication and efforts, many people in Georgia, especially children, have been free of pain and suffering from dental disease which in turn affects the overall health of the people.

Dr. Alderman has also taken a very active role and made many contributions to the oral health of the people in this country as a whole through his involvement in state, regional, and national organizations such as serving as President of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, Georgia Partnership for School Health, the American Board of Dental Public Health, the Georgia Public Health Association, and the Southern Health Association. He has also served as Chair of the Oral Health Section of the of the American Public Health Association and a retired Colonel of the U. S. Army Reserve. He is a Fellow and Life Member of the Georgia Dental Association, a Life Member of the American Dental Association, and a fellow of the American College of Dentists. The list goes on and on.

He has been recognized by various public health and dental organizations for his contribution by being presented various awards including Outstanding Achievement Award by the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, the USPHS Chief Dental Officer Award for Exemplary Service, the Georgia Dental Association Public Service Award, and the GlaxoSmith Kline Child Health Georgia Special Individual Recognition Award.

SHA is proud to recognize Dr. Joe Alderman for this most prestigious award for his many years of service to the citizens of Georgia, the Southern Health Region and the Nation.

Membership *matters*

Report from the Board Secretary

Gregory Fenno

At the closing session of the 78th Annual Meeting and Conference of the Georgia Public Health Association, the membership elected the following officers for 2007-2008:

President: W. Douglas Skelton

President-Elect: Russell B. Toal

Vice President: Robert V. Taylor

Secretary: Gregory H. Fenno

Treasurer: Regina P. Abbott

American Public Health Association Representative:

Johanna M. Hinman

Southern Health Association Representative:

E. Joseph Alderman

Representative-at-Large:

Alpha Fowler Bryan

Representative-at-Large:

C. Wade Sellers

The membership also approved the following individuals for

Honorary Membership:

Michael Chaney;

William C. Fields

The following sections reported election results from their respective meetings during the 78th Annual Meeting and Conference:

EMS/Emergency Preparedness:

Tamber D. Fuller - Chair

Susan P. Malone - Vice Chair

Richard M. Quartarone - Secretary

Environmental Health:

Chadwick "Todd" Jones - Chair

Stephany Shinpock - Vice Chair

Chris Kumnick - Secretary

Epidemiology:

Linda Allen-Johnson - Chair

Wendy P. Cameron - Vice Chair

Olivia K. Mallichek - Secretary

Ronnie Boone - Treasurer

Governance:

John Williams - Chair

Jim Wright - Vice Chair

Charlotte W. Bedell - Secretary

Health Education and Promotion:

LaTonje K. May - Chair

Angela Horry Johnson - Vice Chair

Amanda Walpole - Secretary

Health Information/Information Technology:

Jamey Smith - Chair

Patsy L. Medley - Vice Chair

Cher Chen - Secretary

Maternal Child Health:

Anilkumar Mangla - Chair

Medical/Dental:

Harold W. Pitts - Chair

Linda L. Koskela - Vice Chair

Nursing:

Pat A. Townley - Chair

Linda A. O'Donnell - Vice Chair

Linda Hubbard - Secretary

Nutrition:

Rhonda Landrum - Chair

Tonya E. Scott - Vice Chair

Dorothy Hart - Secretary

Office Personnel:

Joyce Watkins-Epps - Chair

At the Executive Board Meeting held immediately following the 78th Annual Meeting and Conference, GPHA President W. Douglas Skelton announced the following committee chair appointments:

Annual Meeting:

Gregory H. Fenno

Awards:

Margaret R. Bean

Bylaws:

E. Joseph Alderman

Career Development:

William C. Fields

GPHA Matters Editor:

Robert J. DiVito, Esq.

Exhibits:

Trisha Southwell &

Pamela Thompson

Finance:

Regina P. Abbott

Membership:

Kathryn Martin

Memorials:

J. Ferrell Curlee

Moderator:

Lynn W. Thafvelin

Program:

Robert V. Taylor

Public Relations:

Ginger Heidel

Registration:

Theresa T. Clark

Section Alignment:

Cathy R. Green

Sellers-McCroan:

Russell B. Toal

Sponsorship:

Frances Carter

Strategic Planning:

William C. Fields

On October 11-12, 2007, the Georgia Public Health Association conducted its annual board training and retreat in Savannah, GA.

Respectfully submitted,
Gregory Fenno



The General Assembly

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

December 1, 2007

Dear Fellow GPHA Members and Friends:

Three months have passed since we gathered together in Savannah for an outstanding Annual Meeting and Conference. As a newcomer to this event, I will tell you that your commitment, enthusiasm and passion for Georgia's public health were refreshing and invigorating – so much so that I joined GPHA as a full member. GPHA encompasses individuals from a myriad of disciplines and backgrounds, all joined together to "Prevent. Promote. Protect."

When Georgia Senate President Eric Johnson and I presented the "How to Effectively Communicate With Your Lawmakers" session, we saw in you the makings of an enormously effective citizen advocacy team. GPHA also now has a Legislative Relations Representative (aka "Lobbyist") to bring your message to the Capitol. Combined with the energy that each of you so dedicatedly devote to Georgia's public health, I am confident that we will begin to see positive results. Besides, it's not every organization that has Georgia House Appropriations Chair Ben Harbin deliver a plenary address!

Thank you for allowing me to participate in such a quality event. I look forward to working with you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Jill Chambers
State Representative

Membership *matters*

News from the GPHA Office Personnel Staff Section

Joyce Watkins-Epps, Chair

Well, here I am again! Let's congratulate our Office Personnel winner, Theresa T. Clark, District 8 – Valdosta, GA. Theresa is committed and has shown dedication to GPHA, especially in handling our registration process. Again congratulations Theresa.

For those of you who attended this year's conference – THANK YOU. Thanks to GPHA Board Secretary Gregory Fenno for securing our section presenters, Georgia House Representative Jill Chambers and Georgia Senate President Eric Johnson. From them we received valuable information on effectively communicating with our elected officials. It was a unique opportunity for us to join forces with the Governance Section. I hope everyone left with something they could carry back and share with others in their community about how to better relate and communicate with our elected officials.

I would like to encourage you to attend the Sellers-McCroan Lecture & Award event on March 28, 2008 at the Cobb Galleria Centre in Atlanta, and encourage each of you to attend our 29th Annual Meeting and Conference to be held in Savannah, December 2-5, 2008 at the Westin Savannah Harbor. Both of these events are very informative and educational for each and every employee that serves in Public Health.

Let me remind you of our commitment to increase our section membership this upcoming year. We need to increase our membership by at least ten (10) new members. I encourage you to do your part in recruiting new members.

If you have any suggestions for our section meeting or for workshops at the Annual Meeting and Conference, please contact me!

Richmond County Health Department (District 6)
1916 North Leg Road
Augusta, GA 30909-4437
jwepps@dhr.state.ga.us
(706) 667-4284

News from the GPHA Governance Section

John Williams, Chair

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to serve as the chair of the Governance Section. I would like to thank Mr. Jim Wright, a member of the Coweta County Board of Health for serving as the vice chair of the Governance Section and Ms. Charlotte W. Bedel, a member of the Tift County Board Health, who is serving as our secretary. A special thanks to Dr. Lana Norman, a member of the Harrison County Board of Health, past chair of the Governance Section.

Dr. Lana Norman made tremendous progress during her tenure as chair of the Governance Section. She completed the By-Laws of the Governance Section. They were approved at the Annual Conference Section meeting in Savannah. She also made recommendation for the Advocacy Team to work with the Local Boards of Health to address local state and national issues. The Advocacy Team was also added to the By-Laws and approved.

I was very pleased that Georgia Senate President Eric Johnson and Georgia House Representative Jill Chambers made comments on how to bring forward issues of concern to our elected officials during our section meeting held in Savannah. Thanks to Mr. Fenno, our board secretary for arranging for these two legislators to present. Due to the reduction of funding in public health, it is very important that we all become active and educate our elected officials on the local and state level. Grant-In-Aid-Dollars are a major component of the local Boards of Health budgets and very instrumental in the ability to deliver health services to citizens.

I would like to plan a day at the capital in Atlanta during next year's Legislative Session, to talk with as many elected officials as possible about public health issues. I would also like to invite you to join Mr. Steven Anthony, GPHA Legislative Relations Representative and myself at the capital on a day to be announced at a later date.

I was very pleased to see the increase of local Boards of Health members that were present at the GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference in Savannah. There was an increase in the local board of health that joined the GPHA. A gratifying 148 county boards of health have joined GPHA out of 159 with only 11 counties left to join.

The Georgia Legislative Session will convene next year during the month of January. There will be a lot of discussion about the Speaker of the House, Glenn Richardson's plan to eliminate all property taxes which is called The GREAT Plan. Please remind your elected officials that the true "Great Plan" is for a healthy and revitalized Public Health system to continue promoting the public and personal health of Georgia citizens.

Membership *matters*

The GPHA Database Project

*Jamey Smith, Health Information,
Information Technology Section, Chair*

The GPHA Database Project began as a simple effort to assist with the cleanup of the existing Microsoft Access database, which was being used for membership tracking. As with any new project, our first step began with an investigation; how was this database used, what sort of information did it collect, what was the desired result, and who uses it, among other things. The "Who uses it?" question was really the trigger that caused us to think seriously of undertaking a complete rebuild of the software, using LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP) tools in order to create a true, Web-based application. The folks entering the data were not in the same geographic location, which caused major problems when trying to use an Access database for this purpose.

A side note is in order here: The Coastal Health District has developed several successful applications using LAMP technology. LAMP tools are FOSS (Free Open Source Software) that cost nothing to download and use. While cost is often very important, especially when working under tight budget restrictions, FOSS has many other advantages as well. Bugs are often fixed much quicker than with proprietary software, because there are legions of programmers world wide that scrutinize the code, and submit corrections and improvements. Because of the competition between programmers to produce the tightest code possible, FOSS applications often perform better than their proprietary counterparts. This also allows older hardware platforms to continue to be useful long after Windows requirements have rendered them obsolete. A great example of FOSS that most people have heard of (and that many of us use) is the Firefox web browser from the Mozilla organization. I use a version of Linux on my main workstation and laptop, and am typing this article using Open Office. I manage our network resources using all Open Source tools, and have found nothing of significance to prevent me from accomplishing everyday, as well as complex, tasks. And, all of this goodness with no viruses, trojans, worms, or other infections! While there are FOSS antivirus products out there, I have never installed or used any of them, because there has been no need up to this point.

But, back to the Database Project. I built a LAMP server based on Linux version SUSE 9.3, and our programmer, Mr. Cory Weston, did all of the hard work of developing a database to mimic the functions of the existing Access database, while adding a number of enhancements to improve ease of use. He then imported the live data from Access, and sent out the web links and login credentials to the data entry folks for testing. All went well, and on October 10th we "went live" with the new system, and archived the old database as a backup. Now, using nothing more than a web browser and an Internet connection, folks in Atlanta can login and enter data, while folks in Savannah can login and run reports. There's no more emailing the data files around to those that need them, worrying about corruption due to transfers, or concerns of multiple copies of various vintage. It no longer matters where the users are physically located, which will allow us to easily recruit more folks to help "clean up" the information. Our next step will be to provide Section Chairs with login credentials, which will allow them to correct the entries for their membership. Divide and conquer!

Once the new GPHA web site is up and running, we plan to include a link to allow each member to edit certain sections of their own record, so that they may update contact information particularly. Our ultimate goal is to allow self registration and renewal, and to provide live registration at the next GPHA summit meeting in December, 2008. I'll keep you posted as to our progress.

Georgia Public Health Nurses Have Symbolic Pin

Betty Dixon, Clinical Coordinator, District 9-1

The idea of a Georgia Public Health Nursing pin was discussed in February when members of the Office of Nursing and District Nurses were in Atlanta. Ideas about color, symbolism and shape were debated. Betty Dixon, Clinical Coordinator for District 9-1, took the lead and submitted drafts to the Office of Nursing. Carole Jakeway, Chief Nursing Officer, and her staff gave final approval and a Georgia Public Health Nursing pin was created!

The pin is gold symbolizing richness in strength and character. In the center are three pillars representing Courage, Wisdom and Advocacy. The banner connecting the three pillars proclaims the goals of Public Health "Protection, Preparedness, and Promotion". Across the arch connecting the pillars is Prevention, the cornerstone of Georgia Public Health.

The Lamp of Florence Nightingale is lit and placed high atop the columns inside the arch signifying the illumination Georgia Public Health nurses have, not only in their communities but also to overall preventive health care knowledge.

Circling the gold center of the pin is a row of sparkling white stones and a row of blue stones. Blue is traditionally used in health care and symbolizes wisdom. White is traditional to nursing and is the color of serenity and of peace.

Public health nurses throughout the state quickly snapped up over two hundred pins and more are ordered. Pins are \$10.00 each and can be purchased by contacting Betty Dixon at etdixon@dhr.state.ga.us.

Public Health Nursing pins are showing up on lapels of public health nurses as they address leaders on policy, speak on television, discuss chronic diseases and in clinics where children receive back-to-school immunizations.

Carole Jakeway says "we are so delighted to have these pins which create a common bond for all of us, regardless of location".

Membership *matters*

Awards Program

Karen T. Plemons

At the 2007 Legacy Awards Luncheon, everyone was recognized as a winner for contributions to promoting Public Health in Georgia. Special individual recognition for exemplary leadership and promoting best practice models in Georgia Public Health was awarded to:

- Al Dohany Award for Community Service - Anderson Flen;
- Jules S. Terry Memorial Award - Peggy Berry;
- Primary Health Care Leadership Award - Karmon Suits;
- Maggie Kline Award - Melisa A. Fincher;
- Lillian D. Wald Public Health Nursing Award - Debbie Crowley;
- Ruth B. Freeman PH Nursing Award for Population Health Practice - Lynn Walls;
- Larry W. Miller Health Information Specialist of the Year - Elaine J. Hallisey;
- Kathy Miner Award - Jamie Shankles, Marnie Harper, and Kim Sheffield;
- Georgia Dental Public Health Award of Merit - Rosalyn Bacon;
- Office Personnel Outstanding Service Award - Theresa Clark;
- Maternal and Child Health Community Service Award - Roberta M. Smith, MD;
- Barfield Papers Award - Cheryl Christie;
- Environmentalist of the Year Award - Dwain Butler;
- Janet Stancliff Award - Olivia Mallichek;
- Rosemarie B. Newman Nutrition Extra Mile Award - Rhonda Landrum;
- Legislators of the Year - House of Representatives Study Committee on Public Health: Rep. Donna Sheldon, Rep. Mickey Channell, Rep. Ed Rynders, Rep. Ron Stephens, and Rep. Len Walker;
- GPHA President's Award for Distinguished Service - Gregory Fenno.

In addition to recognizing individuals at the Annual Legacy Awards Luncheon, the Awards Program is designed to inspire continuous recognition throughout the year. Recognition is valued by GPHA because recognition enhances motivation, causes creativity to flourish, and promotes hope in the organization. It is critical that in Public Health we capitalize on every opportunity to recognize our most valuable resource, our employees. It is not too early to start filling out the nomination forms which will be soon listed on the GPHA website.

News from the GPHA Epidemiology Section

Linda Allen-Johnson, Chair

The EPI Section annual Public Health Workshop was held July 20, 2007, at the DHROD training facilities in Macon, Georgia. Topics featured were Chronic and Notifiable Diseases, Cultural Competency, Chlamydia Awareness, Immunization and South Georgia Fires – A Public Health Response. Thanks to all the presenters and participants for making the workshop a success.

The EPI Section advisory committee wants to thank all the volunteers and contributors for their participation at the GPHA Silent Auction during the Annual Meeting and Conference. The proceeds from the auction will fund the Dr. Jim Alley Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded to Master of Public Health, medical and dental students with an interest in public health and underserved populations with documented health and economic disparities.

Johnny Miller, MPH, Public Health Liaison and Hollard Phillips, MPH, Communicable Disease Coordinator, were the speakers at the section meeting for GPHA 78th Annual Conference and Meeting. They presented slide presentations on the Americus –Tornados and South Georgia Fires. The EPI Section presented Mike Chaney with a lifetime honorary membership award for his dedication to the Section. The meeting concluded with the introduction of the new officers for 2007-2008. They are Linda Allen-Johnson-Chair, Wendy Cameron -Vice Chair, Ronnie Boone-Treasurer, Olivia Mallichek-Secretary and two members at large Kelly Bruce and LaKesha Strong.

Membership *matters*

News from the GPHA Nursing Section

Pat Townley, Chair

First, let me start by saying a big thank you to nurses from all around the State for their attendance and support of the nursing section. We had a total of 74 present at our section meeting. It was both a show of commitment and support for our GPHA nursing section.

A short review of our section meeting. Our award winners for 2007 were:

- Primary Health Care Leadership Award - Karmon Suits, RN, Case Manager, MAC at Whitfield County Health Department
- Jules S. Terry Memorial Award – Peggy Berry, RN, Retired, Peachtree City
- Ruth B. Freeman, Population Health Award – Lynn S. Walls, RN, BSN, MPA, County Nurse Manager in Upson County Health Department
- Lillian D. Wald, Public Health Nursing Leadership Award – Debbie Crowley, APRN, Nursing and Clinical Director for East Metro Health District
- Maggie Kline Award- Melisa Fincher, RN, CCE, PH Nurse Specialist in White County Health Department
- Barfield Paper – Cheryl Christie, MSN, MS, APRN, BC, Manager of Whitfield County Health Department

Our elections resulted in a new secretary, Linda Hubbard who recently retired from the Macon area. She will be working to update nurses throughout the year via newsletters and emails as to work being done in the nursing arena.

Betty Dixon, Clinical Coordinator, District 9-1 presented information on the nursing pin and donated and gave away door prizes. (*Please read Betty's article on Page 5*).

Dr. J. Patrick O'Neal took time from his busy schedule to pay tribute to the work done by nursing staff with Public Health. His words were very uplifting as he discussed the various roles and challenges faced daily by nurses working within their communities.

Barbara Miller, RN, Nurse Manager, Ware County Health Department discussed the local health department's response to wild fires which occurred in South Georgia. The fire started on April 16, 2007 and blazed for 6 weeks. A total of 564,000 acres in South Georgia and Florida were burned. Public Health staff collaborated with the University of Georgia to monitor air quality. They also worked closely with local daycares, schools, personal care homes, and nursing homes to make sure their clients were protected from the adverse effects of widespread smoke. The health department provided necessary vaccines to firefighters and coordinated evacuation and sheltering activities.

Eileen Albritton, RN, District Nursing and Clinical Director, West Central Health District presented information about their district's response to tornados which occurred on March 1-2, 2007. One of the tornados hit Sumter Regional Hospital. Public health offered assistance in the coordination of evacuees from the damaged hospital, provided immunizations to emergency responders, dispensed WIC formula to residents whose homes were destroyed, relayed safety and educational materials, performed limited case management, and inspected the portable facility which briefly housed some of Sumter Regional's patients. Environmental Health inspected emergency shelters and assisted in the damage survey.

Carole Jakeway, RN, Chief Nurse closed the session by thanking presenters and award winners for their hard work. She discussed preparation of a position paper on the status of Public Health Nursing in Georgia and encouraged members to attend the Public Health Study Committee hearings being held in the Plaza Room of the Riverfront Marriott. She also encouraged nurses to take the time to thank legislators for the Public Health Nursing salary increases coming in January 2008 and to remind them that the work is not yet completed as there are other nursing pay grades that were not included.

Again, thank you for your support and encouragement. Feel free to contact me at any time at patownley@dhr.state.ga.us.